

Ardrishaig Early Learning and Childcare Day Care of Children

Ardrishaig Primary School
Glengilp Road
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Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
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Service provided by:
Argyll and Bute Council

Service provider number:
SP2003003373

Service no:
CS2015338311

About the service

Ardrishaig Early Learning and Childcare is a daycare of children service. The service operates from their own purpose built nursery and enclosed outdoor space. The service is attached to the local primary school in Ardrishaig, near the town of Lochgilphead. The service operates during school term times.

The service provider is Argyll and Bute Council.

The service is registered to provide a care service to a maximum of 20 children, three to those not yet attending primary school age of whom four children can be between two to three years old.

Staffing ratios as stated in the NCS - Early Education up to the age of 16 (Appendix A) must be maintained at all times. A minimum of two adults must be present at all times.

About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on Wednesday 22 October and Thursday 23 October 2025. This inspection was carried out by two inspectors from the Care Inspectorate. To prepare for the inspection we reviewed information about this service. This included previous inspection findings, registration and complaints information, information submitted by the service and intelligence gathered throughout the inspection year.

To inform our evaluation we:

- spoke/spent time with nine people using the service
- received two completed questionnaires
- spoke with three staff and the management team
- assessed core assurances, including the physical environment
- observed practice and daily life
- reviewed documents.

As part of our inspections, we assess core assurances. Core assurances are checks we make to ensure children are safe, the physical environment is well maintained and that a service is operating legally. At the time of this inspection, improvements were identified relating to core assurances. We have reported where improvement is necessary within 'Children are supported to achieve'.

During this inspection we gathered specific information to help us understand more about how services support children's safety, wellbeing and engagement in their play and learning. This included reviewing the following aspects:

- staff deployment
- safety of the physical environment, indoors and outdoors
- the quality of personal plans and how well children's needs are being met
- children's engagement with the experiences provided in their setting.

This information will be anonymised and analysed to help inform our future work with services.

Key messages

- Staff were kind, caring and respectful and children were happy, confident, and having fun.
- Mealtimes provided children with opportunities to socialise and promote their independence.
- Outdoor play was encouraging children to explore, investigate, and develop their friendships and relationships with their peers.
- Staff and management had worked hard in developing the environment.
- The team worked well together and supported each other through effective communication while sharing roles and responsibilities.
- Management and staff were working together to create opportunities to develop and embed the service's vision, values and aims.
- Staff would benefit from additional resources for the playroom to soften the environment and support children with sensory needs.
- Staff should continue to be responsive in their planning, developing strands of learning that are based on and respond to individual children's interests.
- Personal plans and collaborative working with professionals including information gathered to support children's health, welfare and safety needs should be improved.

From this inspection we evaluated this service as:

In evaluating quality, we use a six point scale where 1 is unsatisfactory and 6 is excellent

Leadership	4 - Good
Children thrive and develop in quality spaces	4 - Good
Children play and learn	4 - Good
Children are supported to achieve	4 - Good

Further details on the particular areas inspected are provided at the end of this report.

Leadership 4 - Good

Quality Indicator: Leadership and management of staff and resources

We evaluated this quality indicator as good, where there were important strengths within the setting's work and some aspects which could benefit from improvement.

Management and staff were working together to create opportunities to develop and embed the service's vision, values and aims. We acknowledge the service's concept on how these linked and connected with the local community. They used local landmarks to support in connecting children, families, and the school. For example, the light house in the bay represented looking out for each other and their environment and the anchor was a symbol of developing teamwork.

Staff and management strived to include and involve parents and children in embedding the vision, values and aims as part of their everyday life. For example, through time to talk sessions, implementing visuals for the children and developing new personal plans. As a result, we found the service had clear aspirations for their children, families, and the community.

The service used some processes for self-evaluation. The manager had developed a yearly calendar of events highlighting meetings and events on a weekly basis over the year. This included, staff meetings, care plan reviews, meetings with outside agencies and professionals. This was supporting the management team, and staff to be clear on weekly and daily events and enabled them to plan and be organised to support the service to operate smoothly. The service had developed a big book documenting and reflecting on the settings journey of improvement we would encourage this to be continued moving forward.

Regular audits were conducted on children's personal plans and any documented work within the big books, as well as planning. This was in the initial stages of supporting staff and the service to be child focused and promote positive outcomes ensuring that quality learning through play was at the heart of the service delivery.

As part of this year's improvement plan staff will begin to review, reflect, and implement the new 'Quality improvement framework for early learning and childcare sectors: early learning and childcare 2025'. The team would benefit from using the challenge questions and start to think about how this can be implemented as part of their improvement journey moving forward. We discussed with the service how the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS), United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and Realising the Ambition could be used to help document their journey and support them to identify areas where they need to improve.

The team worked well together and supported each other through effective communication while sharing roles and responsibilities. There was a good mix of skills and qualifications within the team. The service supported staff to attend training for example book bug training, literacy and numeracy, and up and away training. Staff told us this was supporting them in their practice and developing their knowledge and confidence. Staff spoke positively about their links with management and how they were supportive, visible, and available when needed. All staff had been safely recruited and were registered with the Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC).

Children thrive and develop in quality spaces 4 - Good

Quality Indicator: Children experience high quality spaces

We evaluated this quality indicator as good, where there were important strengths within the setting's work and some aspects which could benefit from improvement.

Following the last inspection, we recognise that staff and management had worked hard in developing the environment. The nursery was warm, welcoming, and well-ventilated. Within the playroom and outdoors there was ample space for children to play together or on their own if they wished. Children had free flow access to the outdoor area and were independently and confidently putting on outdoor clothing with staff assisting, when required. We observed children accessing areas with confidence and engaging with their peers in developing their play and learning.

Staff had developed areas indoors and outdoors to support children's curiosity, taking account of their developmental stage of play and learning, along with some suitable resources and areas of interest for children to freely access. Staff would benefit from continuing to work on areas inside, with a focus on the layout of the room with consideration to more cosy areas that children can rest and relax. Staff should consider developing the small room for sensory experiences and a space for children to access to self-regulate.

The service entrance had a secure door entry system and visitors signed in on arrival and departure. Children's information was stored appropriately and secured within the office or the playrooms. We sampled risk assessments that were in place and we were satisfied they supported a safe environment. These should be reviewed and updated regularly to reflect any changes.

Accident and incidents were recorded and shared with parents. Management conducted monthly audits to identify any areas of risk and any changes required to support a safe environment for children.

Staff and children washed their hands before mealtimes. We would encourage children and staff to wash their hands at other key points during the day, including when they come in from outdoors. This will help to stop the spread of infection and ensure children and staff are kept safe and healthy.

We identified the front entrance area could be decluttered and developed to be a more welcoming and attractive area for parents and children to be welcomed into. Staff would benefit from additional resources for the playroom to soften the environment and support children with sensory needs.

Children play and learn 4 - Good

Quality Indicator: Play learning and developing

We evaluated this quality indicator as good, where there were important strengths within the setting's work and some aspects which could benefit from improvement.

Children were happy, engaged and actively leading their own play and learning. Outdoor play was encouraging children to explore, investigate and develop their friendships and relationships with their

peers. Areas were set up and designed to support group or individual play. There was a balance of adult directed and freely chosen activities inside and outside which supported children to develop some key skills in literacy, numeracy, arts and crafts. There were opportunities for children to develop their imaginative play making potions and using real life resources in the house area. Children could free flow, which was supporting choice, independence and enabling them to lead on their own play, learning and development. A parent told us: "The staff do a brilliant job, plan lots of learning activities."

Through sampling evidence of children's play, learning and development it was evident that children were making some progress. Staff were providing and facilitating children with some experiences that were of interest supporting their curiosity, creativity and imagination. Staff had created individual books for children to record achievements, learning experiences and supporting them to review and reflect on their journey. Alongside this staff were implementing big books for each zone in the nursery documenting children's play and learning. We would encourage staff to continue to use these and link with other services that have implemented similar recording systems. This will enhance how they are tracking and documenting children's play, learning and development.

A system for planning was in place and staff advised that this was a work progress. We found the approach was in the initial stages of tracking and showing progression, depth and tracking of children's progress. We discussed with staff continuing to be responsive in their planning and developing strands of learning that are based on, and respond to, individual children's interests. Staff would benefit from developing play and learning through focused observations, making effective assessments, while developing provocations and reflecting on how they document children's progress and achievements. This will further deepen and enhance children's learning through enriching their experiences and will support the service to have clear lines of development through documenting the breath, progression and depth of learning.

Children are supported to achieve 4 - Good

Quality Indicator: Nurturing care and support

We evaluated this quality indicator as good, where there were important strengths within the setting's work and some aspects which could benefit from improvement.

Staff were kind, caring and respectful, creating an environment where children felt safe, secure, and valued. Children were happy, confident and having fun. They experienced warm, nurturing, and responsive care from staff who knew them well, which helped them feel welcomed and loved in the setting. Parents told us: "Staff are friendly and welcoming." "Easy to talk to about any issues."

Mealtimes provided children with opportunities to socialise and promote their independence through, collecting their cutlery, plate and cup and self-serving their lunch encouraging responsibility and choice. Overall, we were able to see children enjoying a calm sociable lunchtime experience. Children were encouraged to stay hydrated and had access to their water bottles throughout the session. We discussed with staff and management developing the lunch and snack choices to include a carbohydrate option at snack and ensure there is a choice if children do not eat what is on offer at lunch. We would encourage the service to review the menu choices on offer to ensure they align with current dietary guidelines including Setting the table and Food matters.

Staff were welcoming children and families into the service to be part of the book bug sessions and stay and play. This was supporting parents to be involved helping to enhance children's care, play, learning and development. Moving forward we would encourage the service to welcome parents into the nursery

playroom at drop off and collection times this will develop stronger connections with families and increase their engagement with the service. To support this transition, we would encourage staff and management to use best practice guidance 'Me, my family and my childcare setting' and 'Connecting with your childcare setting – a guide for families' which can be accessed on the Care Inspectorate hub.

Staff spoke confidently about children's individual, likes, dislikes, personalities and interests and how they were supporting individual needs. For example, providing resources to support children's interests or stage of development. When speaking with staff they could describe how they were supporting children and some information was recorded in the children's personal plans. However, we identified inconsistencies across the process. It was not always clear how staff would support and enhance children's health, wellbeing and safety or foster their play and learning. We discussed this with staff and management and have asked they develop a consistent approach across the service through streamlining and accurately recording information. This should include robust risk assessments for children who require them. This will ensure children's information is clear, concise and supports positive outcomes for all children. This was an area for improvement at the last inspection and will be repeated. (See Area for Improvement 1).

We found there were some missed opportunities for the service and professionals to work collaboratively to support best outcomes for children. Management and staff should ensure they work proactively with children, families and other professionals to identify support needs, and have clear strategies in place to ensure children's wellbeing and attendance is sustained. When a child requires multi agency support, other professionals should contribute to ensure children are protected, get the required support and care placing children and families at the heart of any decision making. This includes when a child starts in the service or moves between services. (See Area for Improvement 1).

Areas for improvement

1. To support children's health, wellbeing and safety needs management and staff should ensure they work proactively with children, families and other professionals to identify support needs and have clear strategies in place to ensure children's wellbeing and attendance is sustained. This should include but is not limited to:

- ensuring information gathered within children's personal plans is used appropriately to support children's individual needs. This includes next steps, risk assessments and support strategies for children who require them.

- When a child requires multi agency support, other professionals should contribute to ensure children are protected, get the required support and care placing children and families at the heart of any decision making. This includes when a child starts in the service or moves between services.

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS), which state that: 'My personal plan (sometimes referred to as a care plan) is right for me because it sets out how my needs will be met, as well as my wishes and choices' (HSCS 1.15) and 'My care and support meets my needs and is right for me' (HSCS 1.19).

What the service has done to meet any areas for improvement we made at or since the last inspection

Areas for improvement

Previous area for improvement 1

To support children's health, wellbeing and safety needs management and staff should ensure, information gathered within children's personal plans is used appropriately to support children's individual needs. This includes next steps, risk assessments and support strategies for children who require them.

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS), which state that: 'My personal plan (sometimes referred to as a care plan) is right for me because it sets out how my needs will be met, as well as my wishes and choices' (HSCS 1.15) and 'My care and support meets my needs and is right for me' (HSCS 1.19).

This area for improvement was made on 12 June 2024.

Action taken since then

Staff knew children well and could tell us their individual needs, likes, dislikes and supports. However personal plans continue to require to be developed further. Staff had implemented some further information to support children's health, welfare and safety needs. However we identified the details of information was still not clear on 'how' staff would support individual children and also children who required a risk assessment did not have this in place.

We acknowledge staff have identified where improvements are required and at the end of the inspection had developed a new format that they will implement. This area for improvement has not been met and will be repeated.

We will be adapting this area for improvement to also include that the service strengthen links with professionals and ensure staff and management work proactively with children, families and other professionals to identify support needs and have clear strategies in place to ensure children's wellbeing and attendance is sustained. When a child requires multi agency support, other professionals should contribute to ensure children are protected, get the required support and care placing children and families at the heart of any decision making. This includes when a child starts in the service or moves between services.

Previous area for improvement 2

To keep children safe and healthy, management should review the storage and recording of medication procedures and ensure medication is audited, in line with current guidance.

This is to ensure care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which state that: 'Any treatment or intervention that I experience is safe and effective' (HSCS 1.24).

This area for improvement was made on 12 June 2024.

Action taken since then

We sampled medication held and we found this was stored in line with guidance. Recording of medication procedures were in place and an audit had been undertaken. Management and staff should be ensuring all forms are fully completed and if staff have questions regarding why children are having medication that this is discussed with the parent, management and if needed the health visitor. This area for improvement has been met.

Previous area for improvement 3

To support children's play and learning and enable them to achieve their potential management and staff should:

- Review and further develop their approaches to child-led planning, by ensuring appropriate levels of challenge and depth in play and learning that supports children's curiosity and creativity and enables them to lead on their play and learning.
- Consideration should be given to how individualisation is captured within planning. In addition, planning should be closely linked to observations in children's profiles where meaningful next steps should be recorded. These should be monitored to ensure consistent quality of written observations.

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS), which state that: 'As a child, I can direct my own play and activities in the way that I choose, and freely access a wide range of experiences and resources suitable to my age and stage, which stimulate my natural curiosity, learning and creativity' (HSCS 2.27) and 'My care and support meets my needs and is right for me' (HSCS 1.19).

This area for improvement was made on 12 June 2024.

Action taken since then

Planning had been developed and staff were recording observations and children's next steps including experiences within the three learning zones. This is still a work in progress for the staff, but they are confident in the process they are using. This should now be progressed and developed to link with children's individual learning books, developmental milestones and curriculum trackers. Experiences have improved and staff are beginning to individualise play and learning. This area for improvement has been met.

Previous area for improvement 4

To support positive outcomes and improve children's play experiences management and staff should:

- Provide children with more opportunities outdoors, through free play, physical challenge, open ended materials and loose parts play, to discover, promote their curiosity and imagination, their sense of wellbeing, wonder and adventure.
- Review the layout of children's play spaces indoors with a view to creating more space with better areas and opportunities for children to play and learn, choose resources, and be inspired and creative.

This is to ensure care, play and learning is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which state that: 'As a child, I can direct my own play and activities in the way that I choose, and freely access a wide range of experiences and resources suitable to my age and stage, which stimulate my natural curiosity, learning and creativity' (HSCS 2.27).

This area for improvement was made on 12 June 2024.

Action taken since then

Children now have free flow access to outdoors. Outdoors and indoors has been developed to support play that inspires children's curiosity, creativity and imagination. Staff should continue to develop the setting with consideration to further cosy areas, developing a sensory area for children who require the time and space. This area for improvement has been met.

Previous area for improvement 5

To support and sustain continuous improvement throughout the service, management and staff should embed robust systems to monitor and evaluate all aspects of their service delivery and place high quality play at the heart of their improvement planning.

This is to ensure management and leadership is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which state that: 'I experience high quality care and support based on relevant evidence, guidance and best practice' (HSCS 4.11) and 'I benefit from a culture of continuous improvement, with the organisation having robust and transparent quality assurance processes' (HSCS 4.19).

This area for improvement was made on 12 June 2024.

Action taken since then

Management have implemented an improvement plan, quality assurance calendar and have been meeting with staff regularly through weekly meetings, visits to the playroom and observations of staff practice. We can see that this has supported the service to improve through improving play, learning and development, quality of the environment and supporting staff knowledge and skills. This area for improvement has been met.

Complaints

There have been no complaints upheld since the last inspection. Details of any older upheld complaints are published at www.careinspectorate.com.

Detailed evaluations

Leadership	4 - Good
Leadership and management of staff and resources	4 - Good
Children thrive and develop in quality spaces	4 - Good
Children experience high quality spaces	4 - Good
Children play and learn	4 - Good
Playing, learning and developing	4 - Good
Children are supported to achieve	4 - Good
Nurturing care and support	4 - Good

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